

Learn the facts. Protect yourself. Get tested.

Gay and Bisexual Men and STDs

What do I need to know about STDs?

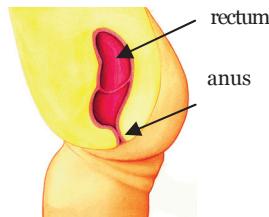
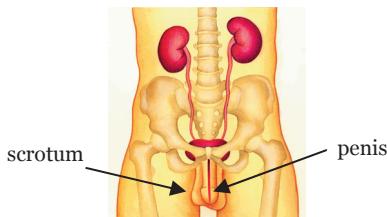
Some gay and bi men are at risk for STDs. You may be at risk for STDs or HIV infection during oral and anal sex. There are a lot of things men can do to stay safe. The best way to protect yourself from STDs and HIV is to use condoms.

Men who are at increased risk for STDs and HIV include those who:

- Have sex without condoms
- Have sex with a lot of partners
- Don't know their STD/HIV status or the status of their partners
- Use drugs or alcohol before or during sex
- Don't practice safer sex
- Don't test regularly for STDs and HIV

What STDs do I need to know about?

STDs can cause infections in the penis, anus, and throat/mouth.



Some STDs are caused by bacteria:

- Syphilis
- Gonorrhea
- Lymphogranuloma Venereum (LGV)
- Chlamydia

Bacteria can be cured with **antibiotic pills or shots**.

Without treatment, some of these infections can lead to long-term health problems.

Some STDs are caused by viruses:

- Herpes
- HPV (human papillomavirus which can cause genital warts)
- Hepatitis A & B
- HIV (human immunodeficiency virus—the virus that causes AIDS)

Viruses usually **can't be cured**. Your doctor might give you some medicine or other treatment that keeps you from getting sick or helps control your symptoms.

Can STDs cause problems if I'm HIV-positive?

Yes. STDs can increase the amount of HIV in your body as well as affect how well your treatment works to fight HIV. Having an STD also makes it easier to transmit HIV. If your partner is HIV negative, he's more likely to acquire HIV infection if he has an STD.

How do I know if I have an STD?

Many STDs don't have symptoms you can see or feel. Learn what is normal for your body. Some things that may not be normal are:

- Pain when you have sex or urinate
- Bumps or sores around your penis, anus, or mouth
- Discharge from your penis or anus
- Rash on your body
- Mucous in your feces

The only way to know for sure if you have an STD is to have regular testing for STDs.

What are the tests like?

A doctor or nurse may take a sample of your blood



and may swab your anus, throat/mouth or rash/sore



or they may ask you for a sample of urine.



What can I do to protect myself?

- You can choose not to have sex
- You can reduce your number of partners if you choose to have sex
- You can use condoms when you have sex
- You can reduce or stop using drugs and alcohol when you have sex
- You can talk with your partner(s) about STDs
- You can talk with a doctor about your risks and about getting vaccines for hepatitis A & B
- You can visit www.gettestedboston.org to find a doctor or clinic near you
- You can call a crisis counselor (1-800-841-8371) for help if you are being forced to have sex or are afraid your partner will hurt you

To find out more about STDs (sexually transmitted diseases) or for information about where you can go to get tested, call (617) 983-6940 or visit www.mass.gov/dph/cdc/std